

Oliver Dunnett - Masters Scholarship

Having pretty much always been aviation mad and having my sights set on a career in aviation as a pilot I took the decision to join the Air Cadets at 13 through my school's CCF. A couple of years later I was lucky enough to be awarded a place on the Air Cadet Pilot Scheme which was ten hours of initial flying training at *Tayside Aviation* in Dundee. Having had a great two weeks in Dundee I was chatting to one of the PPL students there who explained that he was



on a full PPL Scholarship awarded by the *Honourable Company of Air Pilots*. After returning back to Lincolnshire I took some time to research the company as well as having a look at the 'Flying Scholarships' section on their website for a full PPL, the prospect of which filled me with excitement as a PPL was something I had often thought about over the past few years but it was simply unaffordable- at the time I was just about managing to pay for regular gliding thanks to a part time job. I must admit that after reading about the application process and reading past winner's write ups I thought my chances were fairly remote so I put the scholarship to the back of my mind and carried on gliding whilst waiting for the application window to open.

In January I visited the company's website and downloaded the application forms, having spent hours writing out countless copies of my answers I finally submitted my final version and sent it off. I saw on the website that candidates wouldn't be aware if they'd made it to the interview stage until a few months later when they'd be contacted. As the months went past I was surprised that I'd heard nothing regarding my initial application, neither good nor bad. In order to just clarify my own position I contacted the office and received a prompt reply saying effectively that I had been given an interview place in London as one of the final 24 candidates the following Wednesday- very nearly a missed opportunity! I was of course delighted but also surprised that I had been selected for the interview stage, after a weekend of preparation and suit shopping (the school one was fairly tired!) I was excited to head down to Cobham House for my selection morning. Having arrived a few hours early I had time to cram in some extra preparation whilst sat in Costa! When the time came I walked over to Cobham House and met the 3 other candidates for that session. Understandably we were all fairly nervous- it was potentially an entire PPL after all! We met the Office Staff of the company who did a brilliant job of reducing the nerves, following a short aptitude test I was introduced to Immediate Past Master Chris Ford who would be one of my interviewers in conjunction with Kat Hodge. After what I considered to be a fairly poor interview on my part with plenty of waffling I left Cobham House and spent the next few hours sightseeing around London before my train back. This gave me time to reflect on what had gone well and what hadn't, the take away for me was think before speaking! Around a week later I was absolutely elated to receive an email saying I had been selected for one of these highly prestigious and sought after scholarships.

The day after finishing my last A Level exam I went to my flight school of choice, *Fly365* at Wickenby is a small school but extremely friendly and I was made to feel at home straight away. I then met my Primary Instructor Steve Trafford, Steve would turn out to be a very approachable, knowledgeable, and calm instructor who didn't miss a thing. I was then introduced to the Cessna 152 which was certainly a change from the gliders and Grob 115 that I'd flown previously. Needless to say I couldn't wait to get started the following day. Over the next few months I steadily worked my way through the PPL syllabus and beyond (in a few cases) as is Steve's meticulous nature, it was all great fun but it soon came time to start thinking about the 9 EASA PPL written exams to be sat. After many evenings of self-study and hassling Steve I was pleased to pass them all first time. Towards the end of my exams the syllabus moved towards Navigation which was a completely alien topic to me and I'm sure my secondary instructor would confirm this after my first dual land away! However within a couple of hours it was all coming together nicely and turned out to be the most satisfying part of the course. I then had a few hours of solo navigation flights to fit in, I had a thoroughly enjoyable time flying



around over Lincolnshire- a notable highlight must have been watching the Red Arrows complete a Loop over Scampton as I watched from 2000ft. Before much longer it was time for my RT practical which I passed (Thanks to *True Airspeed Training* at Gamston) and then my QXC. My route was from Wickenby to Cambridge and Nottingham before returning to

Wickenby. After waiting for just over a week for suitable weather I was finally sent off by myself, the following few hours were brilliant fun and I returned to Wickenby with my QXC form all filled out correctly! I then had a couple of hours to practise for my Skills Test which involved lots of 'polishing', the following day was set to be my Skills Test but sadly the weather pushed that back a day or so. Luckily on the test day the weather was excellent and after a brief chat with my examiner we set off for the test which in hindsight was both enjoyable and challenging, after arriving back from the test I was told that I'd passed. I was of course absolutely delighted and can't wait to put my PPL to good use before hopefully moving onwards towards a career as a professional pilot.

As a person who has aspired to hold a PPL for a number of years I never conceived of the possibility of finishing the course just after turning 18, as a result I am hugely grateful to the *Honourable Company of Air Pilots* for awarding me this incredible Scholarship. I would also like to thank all of the Company members who generously donated to Chris Ford's fundraising campaign to help not only myself but also *Orbis* and *London's Air Ambulance*- two organisations which are arguably of far greater importance than my PPL! The list of individuals who have helped me to achieve my PPL is far too long to write down here but I would just like to highlight my Primary Instructor *Steve Trafford* and *Angie Rodriguez* who has managed my scholarship from an administrative point of view both efficiently and effectively while being very approachable throughout. Aside from the flying I feel this scholarship has also developed me as a person especially in relation to confidence and self-reliance and has even lead to the

possibility of a job working at the Flying School. Once again I'd like to say a massive thankyou to the *Honourable Company of Air Pilots* and its members for their extraordinary generosity and the very best of luck to all future applicants.